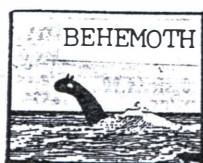


This is BILK # 69 - January 1969 - Bilk appears bimonthly and is edited by Ulrich Magin - Fribolinstraße 5 - 74321 Bietigheim-Bissingen - Subscription: DM 15 for Europe and DM 20 for the rest of the world. Cheques drawn in foreign currency cannot be accepted. A merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all subscribers.



● Bibliography: African dinosaurs (Strange 16, p.6-11, 52-55) // the legendary "master of otters" of Irish folklore, taken literally in typical cryptozoological fashion (Strange 16, p.32-33, 49) // review of Karl Shuker's new books "Dragons" and "In Search of Prehistoric Survivors" (Strange 16, p. 43) // grunts of Nessie heard by submarine in Loch Ness (Magazin für Grenzwissenschaften 13, p. 764; Strange 16, p. 29) // sightings of a monster in Lake Tianchi, at the Chinese-Corean border, mentioned at various times in Bilk (Strange 16, p.5; Magazin für Grenzwissenschaften 13, p. 764) // a python in Kenia swallowed a boy, who luckily was saved alive (Welt, Okt 24, 95, p. 12; Stuttgarter Nachrichten Okt 24, 95, p. 14; Bietigheimer Zeitung Okt 24, 95) // article, by Francois de Sarre, on unidentified flying dragons in the French Alps (PROTEG News 3/95, p. 29-36)

● Lake Van, Turkey. I first mentioned the Lake Van monster in Bilk 43. In 1990, many locals had observed a monster in the lake. Then, in July 1991, 14-year-old Semih Aliriz jumped into the lake and swam towards a monster people were pointing at. It proved to be an inflatable mattress, riddled with bullet shot - obviously it had been mistaken for the monster before. Now, in October 1995, the monster has surfaced again. Vice-Governor of Van Province, Bestami Alkan, claims to have witnessed a dinosaur-like beast with a hairy body, but kept quite not to frighten the population. This was in 1994. Member of Parliament Nadir Kartal told the Parliament in Ankara the creature had a black head and was furry (I do not know if he was paraphrasing witness reports or had a sighting himself). Anyway, the monster was debated in the Turkish Parliament in Oktober 1995, when it was discussed if the Parliament should establish a commission to investigate sighting reports. The Commission, now established, shall define ways to track the beast. Meanwhile, journalists with cameras and movie-cameras are said to crowd the shores of the lake and try to track it by using motorboats. (Frankfurter Rundschau, 2. Nov 95, p. 38; Welt 2. Nov 95, p. 12; Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung, 2. Nov 95, p. 23) Not everybody took the affair as seriously as the Parliament and the journalists. According to the "Mannheimer Morgen" (2. Nov 95), during the debate on October 31, opposition MP Edip Safter Gaydali countered the report of the Vice-Governor with the remark: "I think you mean the monster of inflation", to which Mustafa Zeydan of the governing party replied: "Yes, it must be that monster we inherited from you". Is it all an attempt to bring tourists to the Van region, which is almost deserted now because of the violent liberation struggle of the Kurds - many Germans who used to go to Anatolia every year have deserted Turkey. Lake Van lies on a high plateau close to the Iran border. It is 1700 m above sea level, up to 100 m deep and has a surface of 8600 square kilometres. It is also called the Anatolian "Dead Sea", as it has no outlet and is therefore very high in salt content. There is little life in it except simple algae and one species of fish. I get Turkish TV via cable, forgot to listen to their German language news. If it doesn't work this time, will the Lake Van monster be resurrected in 1999?



● Usan, Scotland: Nessletter 123 (R Hepple, 7 Huntshieldford, St Johns Chapel, Weardale, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, UK) has an item from the Inverness Courier Feb 1, 1849, on a sea serpent caught at Usan. Brian Herring researched the case now and found at the Montrose Museum that it had only been a species of marine worm. He could have saved much

efforts by consulting the existing literature. Oudemans reported the incident in much detail, a summary of the affair might be found in Heuvelmans (p.221-22). It's strange to see cryptozoologists all discover the wheel for the first time! And I want to emphasise what I've said many times before in Bilk: The Inverness Courier covered every major UK sea serpent story in detail in the 19. C - but never mentioned a sea serpent in Loch Ness. This is definite proof that no monster was ever seen there prior to Alex Campbell's invention of Nessie in 1930. Pro-monster-people always point out how supersicious the local people allegedly were, so why did they report sea serpents when they saw them but never Nessie. And remember there are stories about sea serpents seen in the Loch which turned out

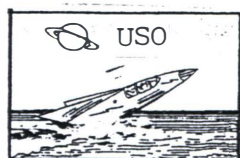
to have been swimming ponies, dolphins or large eels - why does no article in the Courier ever refer to a tradition in combination with these reports. And why did the Courier cover stories of lake monsters in Sutherland or Skye, where people were definitely more backward than in Inverness? The answer is simple: no one ever had heard of, or seen, a monster in the Loch. This was local consensus in the letter page of the Inverness Courier in 1933 and among the people Gould interviewed in 1934. The "monster tradition" of Loch Ness is one more cryptozoological myth.

● Bibliography: review of Ellis' book on sea monsters (Fortean Times 83, p. 59) // review of a new book on Caddy, the British Columbian monster, by its two prime investigators, LeBlond and Bousfield (Strange 16, p. 45)



● Monster Movies: Two movies about giant octopi were recently shown on German TV. The first (on channell Kabel 1, 14 and 15 Oct 95) was "It came from beneath the Sea" (USA 1956, dir: Robert Gordon): A submarine heading for San Francisco encounters a giant octopus, mutated by atomic tests (perhaps we should send a copy to Jacques Chirac...!), which later attacks the city. Silly stuff, but good special effects by

Ray Harryhausen. On Dec 9, 95, Kabel 1 screened "Der Polyp aus der Tiefe" (no original title, USA 1972) where another of our long-armed friends is discovered off Mexico. Guess what - it's not a friendly creature!



● Recent reports: undersea noises off California (Strange 16, p. 5) // UFO hovering over sea at Tolo, Greece, in the summer of 1992 (Fortean Times 83, p. 55) // Lake Nahuel Huapi UFO over San Carlos de Bariloche (Fortean Times 83, p. 8; Magazin für Grenzwissenschaften 13, p. 730) // glowing ball of light over Pacific in June 1994 (Fortean Times 83, p.12) // circles on

ice cover of lakes (Magazin für Grenzwissenschaften 13, p. 765)



● Maria Laxara: Strange 16, p. 12ff, has a very interesting article on Maria Laxara, a mysterious islands that keeps appearing and disappearing - on maps, at least. My own research has indicated that Maria Laxara, half-way between Hawaii and Baja California, was first depicted as Isla Santa Maria la Garta on the world map of Guillaume DeListe (Amsterdam 1730). Close to the island runs a dotted line and the inscription "Retour de Mendaña", so I suppose the island was discovered by Alvaro de Mendaña de Neyra (1541 - 1595) during his first exploration of the Pacific, when, in 1567, he discovered the Salomon Islands, then, on Jan 15, 1568, the islands "Jesus" and "Santa Isabella". It must have been on his journey back home from "Jesus" which led him, in a large semi-circle, west off Hawaii back to South America, when he discovered Maria La Garta. All his logs in my source (Ferdinand Salentiny: Das Lexikon der Seefahrer und Entdecker. Tübingen: Erdmann 1974, p. 293-95) were quoted in French editions of the 19. C only, so I cannot quote him. His route was mapped in a Time Life book on discoveries. Perhaps Maria la Garta was his name for a Hawaiian island he spotted, and was moved to the false location later. On old maps, it was common to fill vast amounts of water with even vaster amounts of imaginary islands.

● Cryptozoology: If you want to learn to what lengths "scientific" cryptozoologists are willing to go to turn a mythical creature into a "real" one, consult Karl Shuker's column in Strange 16. Shuker refers to stories of flying women abducting children and explains how such creatures could resort to humans once their normal prey (f.e. pigs) are few to find. Now, abducting humans is a typical folklore motif for imaginary beings (yeti, bigfoot, extraterrestrials, goblins, dragons), and Shuker can find pictures of two different species of winged humans even here in Europe: one with feathers (Germanic swan maidens, angels) and one with leathery wings (devils). I wonder whether there will be a future Heuvelmans or Shuker to identify these as gigantic bats (and, remember, flying dragons might be the adult specimens of devils...) Like von Däniken sees space-men in any legend or cave drawings, cryptozoologists find new species in every fairy tale. And might not the seven dwarfs be Neanderthal men?

● According to press reports (TIME 27 Nov 95; Spiegel 4 Dec 95) zoologists have found an unknown species of horse in a valley in eastern Tibet, which could be surviving examples of ice age horses! Only DNA tests will bring certainty.